



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Edinburgh Research Explorer

Contact and Identity: The Experience of 'China Goods' in a Ghanaian Marketplace

Citation for published version:

Liu, JJ 2010, 'Contact and Identity: The Experience of 'China Goods' in a Ghanaian Marketplace', *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, vol. 20, no. 3, pp. 184-201. <https://doi.org/10.1002/casp.1028>

Digital Object Identifier (DOI):

[10.1002/casp.1028](https://doi.org/10.1002/casp.1028)

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Early version, also known as pre-print

Published In:

Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology

General rights

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Edinburgh Research Explorer is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

The University of Edinburgh has made every reasonable effort to ensure that Edinburgh Research Explorer content complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact openaccess@ed.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.



Contact and Identity: The Experience of ‘China Goods’ in a Ghanaian Marketplace

JING JING LIU*

School of Clinical Sciences and Community Health, Centre for Population Health Sciences, The University of Edinburgh, GP Section, 20 West Richmond Street, Edinburgh, EH8 9DX, UK



Chinese goods in Makola Market - Photograph taken by participant GIS

ABSTRACT

The rise in Chinese traders and increased availability of low-cost imported goods benefits consumers, challenges local African retailers and is a point of tension in local communities. China's presence in Africa has been largely discussed and analysed through a political economy perspective. The social impact in local communities has been documented anecdotally but has yet to be empirically studied. This study took place in Makola Market, Accra, Ghana, to investigate the emerging intergroup

* Correspondence to: Jing Jing Liu, School of Clinical Sciences and Community Health, Centre for Population Health Sciences, The University of Edinburgh, GP Section, 20 West Richmond Street, Edinburgh, EH8 9DX, UK.
E-mail: jingjing.liu@ed.ac.uk

encounters between established Ghanaian traders and nascent Chinese traders. Photo-elicited semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore how their interrelated experiences shape their interpretative framework and inform the dialectic of contact and social identity. I draw on these interpretative frameworks to propose a new model of contact, the Tri-relational Contact Model, to capture and highlight how people's experiences include contact relationships with not just each other, but also with their places of business and the goods of trade. The findings from this study empirically highlight the micro-level impact of China's presence in Ghana *and* help re-conceptualize the contact hypothesis through a new model of contact with greater analytical utility to explicate the relational nature of contact and social identity formation. Copyright © 2010 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Key words: Ghana; China; Makola Market; marketplace; contact hypothesis; social identity; Africa

INTRODUCTION: CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

In the public and academic sphere, current analyses of China-Africa relations have narrowly focussed on the political-economic activities of Chinese government-supported multinational corporations, their interests in natural resources and their contacts with African governments and elites (see Alden, 2007; Broadman, 2007; Taylor, 2006; Wild & Mephram, 2006). However, 'for ordinary Africans the most significant impact of Chinese economic involvement is low-cost consumer goods available to Africans as never before' (Alden, 2007, p. 58). The prosaic activities of small and medium-sized Chinese businesses enact significant social and economic consequences (Alden, 2007). Their expansion is into sectors and markets formerly dominated by Africans, and to a lesser extent, Lebanese in West Africa and Indians in East Africa (Mohan & Power, 2008). These activities have put local textile and clothing factories out of business and threaten the existence of established retailers across Africa (Alden, 2007; Broadman, 2007).

The influx of Chinese goods and subsequently, Chinese traders into local marketplaces provides a unique site for cultural-economic articulation. It creates a particular 'contact phenomenon' (Kaplan, 1960 in Adalemo, 1981, p. 5) that requires thorough investigation to uncover the nuanced relations (Alden, 2007; Mohan & Power, 2008). Makola Market No. 1 in Accra, Ghana is the site of investigation in this study. Currently, Ghana is the second largest importer of Chinese goods in Africa, with Chinese goods representing 9.1% of their total imports (Jenkins & Edwards, 2006). The processes of globalization and transnationalism facilitate this increasing Chinese presence in Accra's bustling markets, whilst reinforcing Accra's growing status as a global city (Grant, 2001; Grant & Nijman, 2002). Chinese presence in Ghana dates back to the mid-20th century (Ho, 2008), however, numbers have increased in the past few years from 500 in 2001 to an estimated 6000 Chinese people working or living in Ghana in 2004 (Sautman, 2006). Many confounding factors exist, including misidentification, poor baseline data, illegal entries (Mohan, 2008) and the 'temporary' (Ho, 2008) status of the Chinese in Ghana, that make this number difficult to validate.

Ghanaian marketplaces have been sites of previous ethnographic examination (Chamlee-Wright, 1997; Clark, 1994; Darkwah, 2002; Lentz & Nugent, 2000; Overa, 2007; Robertson, 1983; Seligmann, 2001). Studies of Chinese traders in Africa (Hsu's, 2007; Srebrnik, 1999) and in Ghana (Ho, 2008) exist as well; however, they often overlook

the possibility of mutual influences. To date there are no empirical studies that document the *interaction* between Chinese and Ghanaian sellers.

In this paper I consider the complexities of how intergroup contact is mediated and how social identity is formed in the marketplace. As the local marketplace evolves into a global entity fashioned by mobile goods and transnational people, I argue that these articulations are not only invaluable to contextualize and situate China's local presence in Accra, but they also have the potential to reflect and construct the social identities of those occupying the 'global' space of the marketplace. A perspective at the juncture of the local and global, economic and social processes, between Ghanaian and Chinese sellers, can illuminate the complexities of how intergroup contact is mediated and social identity formed in the marketplace.

THE SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY OF CONTACT

Contact hypothesis was introduced in *The Nature of Prejudice* (Allport, 1954) and has become a key paradigm in understanding the social psychology of intergroup encounters. To date, the core of contact knowledge has been primarily accumulated through controlled laboratory and/or experimental work. The neglect of participants' own interpretative frameworks for making sense of everyday contact experiences (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005) demonstrate a need for contact to be studied *in* and theorized *from* 'real-life' settings. Furthermore, contact hypothesis has failed to tell us about *how* in-groups and out-groups¹ interact (Markova, 2007). Three competing models of contact have been put forward.

First, the *decategorization model* stresses that individual and interpersonal interactions would reduce in-group and out-group identification and foster positive contact effects (Brewer & Miller, 1984), such as friendship. This model, however, risks limiting positive effects to the individual rather than representing the outgroup. In response, the *categorization model* emphasizes increasing category salience in group interactions to facilitate greater generalizability (Hewstone & Brown, 1986). Lastly, the *recategorization model* posits an inclusive, superordinate group rather than 'us' and 'them' (Gaertner, Dovidio, Anastasio, Bachman, & Rust, 1993) to account for positive contact effects, yet, neglects that group membership can be subjectively and collectively meaningful (Brewer, 1991). Empirical work suggests positive contact results from a combination of all three processes (Kenworthy, Turner, Hewstone, & Voci, 2005; Pettigrew, 1998). Categorization then is the crux of the contact hypothesis and contributes to identity formation; however, it has privileged face-to-face interactions while people's engagement and negotiation with material contexts, such as places and things remain acutely undertheorized.

More recent work in diverse settings has extended the body of literature on contact. In their study of the perception of migrants, Van Rijswijk, Hopkins, and Johnston (2009) show that by making certain categories of representations more salient, migrants can be viewed as more or less threatening based on relative comparison of the social category in question. They call for further research to explore the social processes by which categories are made salient. A study with Muslims and Hindus in India (Tausch, Hewstone, & Roy, 2009) and a study of small towns in Italy (Prezza, Zampatti, Pacilli, & Paoliello, 2008) re-affirm that increased contact is associated with reduced intergroup anxiety and that relative status in

¹I try to eschew the labels 'in-group' and 'out-group' and instead use 'Ghanaian' and 'Chinese' to signal that they can be both in-group and out-group depending on different situations and contexts.

different categories can have a moderating effect on prejudice. However, these studies are limited in their scope by their use of questionnaires to evaluate contact relationships. This methodological constraint, often delivered in artificial settings, can restrict our focus on the processes of contact to only interpersonal relationships. Other factors require consideration.

Towards situated contact: Space and boundaries

Space is not a neutral backdrop to contact relations. Spaces can facilitate certain social practices and disallow others (Lefebvre, 1991) and can enable or constrain interactions (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005) depending on occupants' relationships with that space. How people invest everyday environments and fill particular spaces with 'richly symbolic, aesthetic, moral and importantly, identity-relevant meanings' (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005, p. 181) shape boundary processes, which in turn, determine the contextual salience of particular social categories (Dixon, 2001). Real and imaginary boundaries form social identities and mediate interactions between self and other (Dixon, 2001; Sibley, 1995). Space such as Makola Market can contribute to an understanding of the human-environment relationships that underlie a 'place-identity' (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005).

The social life of goods

Contact interactions must also consider human-object relationships. Social objects are imbued with history, culture and sociality such that, 'a commodity is a thoroughly socialized thing' (Appadurai, 1986, p. 6) with 'social lives'. The meanings of goods are constituted relationally with people such that they become 'inscribed in their forms, uses and trajectories' (Pels, Hetherington, & Vandenberghe, 2002, p. 6). Importantly, goods are not just reflectors of human activity; they can become active mediators and agents (Latour, 2005). As the conditions of trade change with increasing imports from China to Ghana, the institutional and spatial journeys of goods become more complex and culturally informed mythologies or stories about the goods emerge (Appadurai, 1986) to shape the frameworks people use to interpret their experiences with those goods. Materiality then, or the flexibility and mobility of goods, construct a 'thing-identity'.

SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY

Social identity has important implications for contact hypothesis. Many theories of social identity exist; however, Social Identity Theory (SIT) (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) will be considered here as it offers a more dynamic concept of identity that focusses on group tensions, motivations and conflict (Markova, 2007) and is contingent on processes of categorization.

According to SIT, social identity is a person's knowledge that he/she belongs to a social category or group (Hogg & Abrams, 1988). SIT proposes two main processes in social identity formation during intergroup encounters. In the first process, *categorization*, individuals identify as members of a distinct in-group (Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Stets & Burke, 2000) which influences one's affective, cognitive and behavioural responses towards others (Dovidio et al., 2003). This distinctiveness contributes to increasingly

demarcated intergroup boundaries (Hogg et al., 1995) and is linked to the second process, *social comparison*, where individuals make evaluations such that persons similar to the self are favourably categorized as the in-group in relation to persons who differ from the self and therefore categorized as the out-group (Markova, 2007; Stets & Burke, 2000). Evaluations are made in a way that allow individuals to achieve or maintain positive social identity, and subsequently, positive self-esteem, through a favourable comparison between the in-group and an out-group (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). These social categories are relational and often pre-exist the individual (Hogg & Abrams, 1998), and thus can structure social interactions.

'Chinese' and 'Ghanaian' as open signifiers

Discrete and static categories such as 'in-group' and 'out-group' as described in SIT are inadequate at capturing the dynamic interchange of status in different settings. Since contact relationships can demarcate boundaries, they can also decide which categories are salient for social comparison. To account for both the local and global interface of the market, we need to conceptualize 'Chinese' and 'Ghanaian traders' as open signifiers 'that acquire meaning in dialectical relations to the practices, beliefs and structures encountered in the spaces of flows across nations and markets (Ong, 1999, p. 23)'. Social identities are co-constructed through representations that the Chinese carry with them as they migrate, through images of Ghanaians and Chinese that exist and persist, and through interactions they experience in the marketplace. The increasing pluralization of Chinese and Ghanaian social identities requires greater investigation 'since neither represent a coherent and uniform set of motivations and opportunities' (Mohan & Power, 2008, p. 23).

THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: TRI-RELATIONAL CONTACT MODEL

Treating intergroup encounters as an evolving process (Pettigrew, 1998), this paper investigates how the experiences of Ghanaian and Chinese traders constitute their interpretative frameworks and its implication on the dialectic of contact and social identity. I draw on these interpretative frameworks to propose a new model of contact, the Tri-relational Contact Model (TCM) (Figure 1) to capture and highlight how people's experiences include contact relationships with not just each other, but also with their places of business and the goods of trade. These three contact points facilitate experiences that are more dispersive, diverse and pervasive than face-to-face contact alone. The model further hypothesizes that the processes of categorization important for intergroup contact (recategorization, categorization and decategorization) are mediated and shaped by these relationships with goods, place and people. The categories that arise are subject to and acted upon by the boundaries and dynamics of local and global, social and economic space, making some categories more salient for categorization and social comparison than others. In the process, particular categories structure the potential practices that moderate contact relations, shape social identities and catalyse their mutual feedback. The findings from this study will illustrate the relational nature of these interactions.

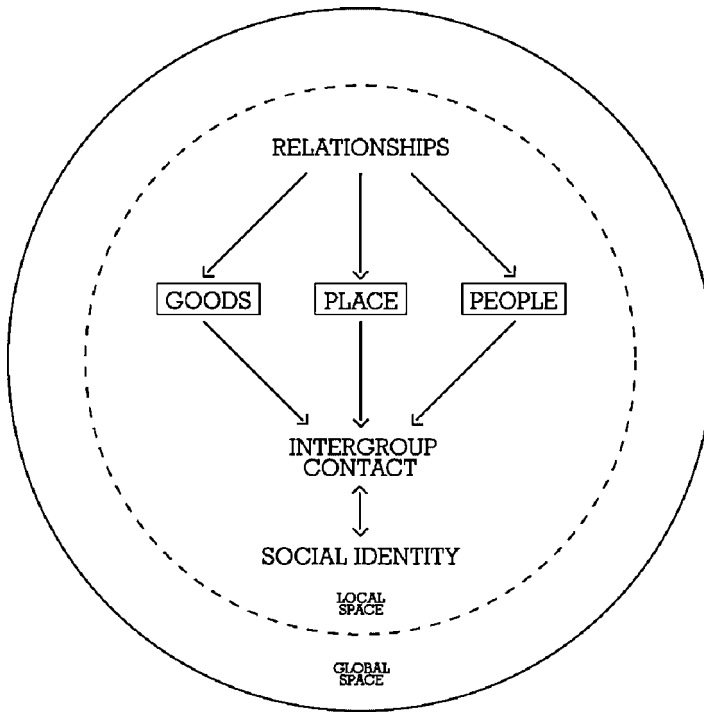


Figure 1. Tri-relational contact model (TCM).

METHODOLOGY

It is "the stories, rumours, anecdotes, jokes, shibboleths, cautionary tales, and other conversational practices through which contact is constantly being brought to definition." (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005, p. 67)

Selecting participants: Stratification

My purposive 'selecting' strategy (Bryman, 2004; Gaskell, 2000) sought to capture the diversity of Ghanaian and Chinese traders in the market. I interviewed sellers and wholesalers (Table 1) who were owners, managers, workers; trading in stalls or outside in the open; and selling different types of wares, from soaps to textiles to electronics. A similar strategy of diversity was employed in selecting Ghanaian and Chinese 'experts'. 'Experts' is a designation for a group of Ghanaian² professionals in fields such as law, journalism and government who are involved in different aspects of China-Ghana relations. 'Expert' interviews served to situate and link the micro-level happenings of trade to the macro-level of China's engagement with Ghana. Six interviews were conducted with

²This group includes one Chinese "expert", an established businessman who has lived in Ghana for the past seventeen years with a longstanding reputation in Ghana.

Table 1. List of interviewees

ID	Gender	Age	Occupation	Description
Ghanaian traders				
G1-S*	Male**	20s	Unofficial 'manager'	Works at a stall*** and sells clothes, luggage and household goods.
G2-S	Male	50s	Worker	Works at this brother's store and sells soaps and household goods.
G2a-S****	Male	30s	Petty trader	Sells mobile phones outside of G2-S' shop, university educated.
G2b-S	Male	30s	Petty trader	Sold watches outside of G2-S' shop, university educated.
G3-S	Male	30s	Manager	Works at an electronic store owned by Lebanese, currently enrolled in university.
G4-S	Male	30s	Owner	Works at an outdoor shoe vending area, his sister owns a wig shop across from him.
G5-S	Female	50s	Owner	Works at a textile stall.
G6-S	Male	30s	Owner	Works at a luggage and bag vending area, also owns a stall. He owns five more stalls in Accra area.
Chinese traders				
C1-S	Male	40s	Owner	Family-run wholesale shop, Accra resident for 5–6 years, employs Ghanaian workers.
C2-S	Female	20s	Business/English Liaison	Works for Chinese-owned and China-based wholesale store, Accra resident for 1.5 years with her husband.
C3-S	Male	20s	Manager	Works for Chinese-owned and China-based wholesale store, Accra resident for 2 years.
'Experts'				
C1-E	Male	40s	Factory Owner	Accra resident for 16 years, 10 of those years were spent running a store in the market.
G1-E	Male	60s	Professional and retired market manager	Former market manager in Accra.
G2-E	Male	40s	Academic	Studies China-Africa policies.
G3-E	Male	40s	Government employee	Works for the Ghanaian government.
G4-E	Male	40s	Consultant	Advises on China-Ghana business in Accra.
G5-E	Male	40s	Journalist	Covers China-Africa news.

*G = Ghanaian; C = Chinese; 1 = participant number; S = Seller; E = 'expert'

**From earlier ethnographic literature I anticipated a greater number of female traders in the market; however, Overa (2007) points to an increase in male traders due to unemployment in the formal sector caused by economic liberalization policies, which could, in part, explain this gender skew in participation selection.

***Vending area = open air, no walls; stall = open front; store = bigger space with doors.

****G2-Sa and G2-Sb represent two other participants who were present and speaking during the interview with G2-S.

Ghanaian traders and three interviews with Chinese traders to reflect that Ghanaians remain a majority in Makola. Five interviews were conducted with Ghanaian 'experts' and one with a Chinese 'expert' in their offices. All of the interviews were conducted in English, lasted between 30 minutes and 2 hours and were recorded and transcribed in full.

Collecting data: Photo-elicitation

Research was carried out over three weeks in the setting of Makola Market in Accra, a labyrinth of streets and alleyways connecting the flow of people selling their goods in stores or hawking their wares on the streets. I provided disposable cameras to my participants in order to use the photo-elicitation technique for interviewing³ since I was interested in the myriad of people, places and goods that inform experiences (Bryman, 2004). The contents of the photographs were pedestrian and mundane, but took on meaning and significance as prompts to elicit discussion during interviews. These photographs helped bridge the understanding between participants and myself to discover the identification of *people* (who they are); *place* (their feelings toward the market); *ecological elements* (process of trade) and historical happenings (Collier, 1995). Many of the nuanced insights into the different kinds of interactions were gained using this method. Importantly, this method allowed for multiple meetings with my participants (distributing the camera, picking up the camera, conducting the interview) to develop greater repertoire over a short period of time.

Collecting data: Semi-structured interviews

I conducted semi-structured interviews with individual traders while they were working to capture the quotidian ways in which they engage with customers, the market and their wares. This type of research is most appropriate as 'everyday ecological arrangements embody common sense understandings of our social relationships and shape opportunities for contact' (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005, p. 42). A topic guide with three broad focusses directed the interviews for Ghanaian and Chinese traders: experiences of doing business, the impact of Chinese goods and experiences with other groups. The photos provided additional prompts for discussion. A separate topic guide with two broad focusses elicited 'expert' opinions and experiences: the impact of China and Ghana's development. The participants gave verbal or written consent.

Analysing data

Analysis was guided by the methodology outlined in Attride-Stirling's (2001) explication of thematic networks. The coding frame was driven by a hybrid approach through integrating expected, deductive codes and unexpected, inductive codes to impel a more rigorous thematic analysis (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The inductive codes were largely informed by the nuanced insights gained through the use of participant's own photos as prompts and subsequently included in the coding frame. Data was coded using the qualitative software package NVivo 7 and codes were grouped into conceptual clusters that generated 18 basic themes, which further grouped into 6 organizing themes and subsumed under 2 global themes. This systematic approach allowed me to look at the consensus, conflict and absence (De-Graft Aikins, 2004) within each thematic cluster.

Reflecting on the research process

My own social identity as a female Chinese-Canadian student became a practical and epistemological concern (Miller & Glassner, 2004) to the 'truthfulness' of interviews that I

³Photo-elicitation was not used with 'expert' interviews because they were not situated in the market.

could elicit, given the topic of my study. In a way, this unease was resolved by my research interests in looking at how people *construct* their contact experiences and how they *represent* others. My positioning may have concealed some 'truths' yet privileged its own unique insights. For example, a few Ghanaian participants told me that both the Chinese and Ghanaians were not telling me the complete truth: the Ghanaian because he was too polite and the Chinese because it was his nature to deceive. I will elaborate on these observations in the following sections.

MAKING CONTACT: RELATIONSHIPS WITH GOODS, PLACE AND PEOPLE

This a Chinese box, all the goods from China, this shop, where I've been all these years, and how things have changed all around me...the hawkers who are also from here, all the goods they sell are Chinese (G3S).

Interpersonal and intergroup relationships

Interpersonal and intergroup contact relationships are the first point of contact and draw heavily on distinctions between retailer-wholesaler and 'citizen'-authority. Ghanaian and Chinese traders interact as *retailers and wholesalers*, respectively. In general, Ghanaian retailers say they have good relationships with their Chinese wholesalers. Positive retailer-wholesaler relationships can foster friendships, 'I even have a Chinese friend, he's called Liang, very nice Chinese man, very young, very nice person...very good friend, he can laugh and joke, everything...Liang was a very nice Chinese, he's one person who mixed very well' (G3S). Friendship can also stem from contact between Chinese wholesalers and local authorities. This relationship stems from paying bribes to local authorities to avoid trouble and preserve their operations. 'The VAT service...always come out and chop⁴ our money, they only want small small and they always come here and tell you because you have plenty goods and you have plenty of money' (C2S). Surprisingly, this relationship was regarded by the Chinese wholesalers as a kind of friendship that needs to be maintained 'because the Chinese man know...officer, yes make friendship with, with him and so can get information easy and can get, can do some operations' (CS3). Thus, the interpersonal relationships described in this study foster cross-group friendships for some Ghanaian and Chinese traders. Building friendship can potentially lead to processes of decategorization of group members.

Place-based relationships

Place-based contact relationships represent the second point of contact. They echo the retailing-wholesaling distinction and emphasise the presence-absence of particular bodies in the market. Makola market is seen as the quintessential *space for retailing* goods by all participants. For Ghanaian sellers and 'experts' alike, the market represents a historical entity, infused with culture, social life and commerce. Additionally, it has a history that is completely independent of China's presence, 'it's always been a feature of our commercial existence, long before China came' (G2E). This relationship is threatened by the Chinese

⁴'Chop' means 'food'; when people ask for 'chop' money, they are asking for money for food, although it has become an expression to designate asking for bribe money.

presence in the market: 'if they are wholesalers they are not to be in the shop because they have to be in the warehouse. . . once they get a shop they become a retailer' (G4E). All of the Chinese traders interviewed say they are wholesaling, but admit they know of some who are illegally retailing. In addition, the 'experts' claim that the majority of Chinese traders are retailing through a shop fronted by a Ghanaian person.

One Chinese wholesaler acknowledges the increasing physical presence of the Chinese traders in the market, 'this street the name is Zongo lane, so here, maybe just 100 metres, maybe about 30 stores, half of them Chinese' (C2S). This contradiction between the designation of the market for retailing *versus* the physical presence of the Chinese, acts as a strong point of tension between Ghanaian and Chinese traders as wholesalers should not be trading in the physical locality of the marketplace. The place-based relationships that emerge deepen the demarcation between retailing and wholesaling space, and therefore, the division between legitimate (Ghanaian) and illegitimate (Chinese) retailers occupying the space. Differentiating boundaries can intensify the process of categorization of group members.



Chinese stores on Zongo lane—Photograph taken by participant C2S

Goods-mediated relationships

Goods-mediated contact relationships represent the third point of contact and illuminate still other categories around which different orientations and opinions exist. Traders define their relationships to Chinese goods in terms of *quality*. The quality of Chinese goods creates tension between the Chinese and Ghanaian traders as they adopt different ways of managing what quality means. One Ghanaian trader sells goods of varying quality, 'most of our products from China. . . we have first grade and second grade, so we take first, second and third grade all mixed up, that is what we do' (G6S). On the other hand, a Chinese wholesaler

claims to carry only high-quality goods in order to protect his reputation in the market. Another Chinese trader believes that importing poor quality goods is a purposeful act, an economic phenomenon called ‘dumping’⁵ (C3S). Regardless, everyone agrees that this influx of Chinese goods increases availability of products and improves consumer choice. ‘People now able to change their underwear, their bras, their brassieres, their school uniforms, their shorts, their socks, their shoes, more times than ever, than they ever did’ (G3E).

Many Ghanaian traders insist that cheap Chinese goods afford a *means for employment*, such as petty trading which the ‘experts’ largely dismiss as neither viable nor sustainable. The Ghanaian traders point to specific Chinese goods that provide employment opportunities to students, rural men and kids. Sunglasses sold on the street for 10 Cedis provide school fees for students; while crockery bought in the market is transported daily back to the village and sold to raise capital for rural men ‘to farm or open small shops, help them to stay in village’ (G1S). In addition, Butterfly brand ‘sewing machines. . . [have] helped a lot. . . taking street kids off the streets. . . [NGOs] buy for them to learn a trade’ (G3S). These stories represent the prospects that specific Chinese wares can offer to a diverse group of Ghanaians who are willing to take the opportunity. Thus, goods-mediated relationships create the most complex relationships. Ambivalence towards Chinese goods can create greater dialogue and exchange of opinions amongst Ghanaian traders themselves, and across groups, which can catalyse the initial stages of re-categorization.



Selling sunglasses as a means of employment—Photograph taken by participant G1S

⁵‘Dumping’ was explained to me by C1E. Manufacturers in one country export to another country at a profit that is lower than the cost of production to offload products; it is generally seen as a negative activity.

The findings show that each contact relationship brings particular categories and categorization processes to the fore. The articulation of people, places and goods obviates more salient categories than a limited perspective on just interpersonal contact relationships and lends empirical support for the proposed TCM. These categories demarcate social boundaries for the possibility of social comparison during intergroup contact and, as I will elaborate in the next section, potentiate social identity construction. Focussing on the intersection of these three kinds of contact relationships, we can begin to view the three seemingly paradoxical models of contact as more complementary than previously thought. The boundaries between these three processes are of course, porous, and the associations messier, but I maintain these divisions in order to highlight a few significant points. Importantly, this complication of the temporal boundaries separating the three processes suggests what Pettigrew (1998) struggled to conceptualize, that more likely, decategorization, categorization and recategorization can occur *simultaneously*.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE LOCAL IN THE MARKETPLACE

A consideration of people-, place- and goods-based contact relationships can facilitate greater category salience but, to a large extent, the social categories in which individuals place themselves are part of a structured social and economic system. Moreover, these social categories precede individuals, so that individuals are *born into* an already structured society (Stets & Burke, 2000), or in the case of the Chinese, *enter into* an already structured society. In this study then, the Chinese, like the Lebanese in Accra (Akyeampong, 2006) can only enter the market as wholesalers within the economic history, culture and laws of Ghana. When individuals enter the market and identify with a particular social category, they come to embody that status on a social hierarchy which 'reflects a group's relative position on some evaluative dimensions of comparison' (Tajfel & Turner, 1986, p. 19).

Previous work has shown that wholesalers and retailers are designated different social status in Makola market, such that retailers and petty-traders have less capital and encounter more restrictions than wholesalers (Campbell, 1985). However, in this study difference in status should not be compared hierarchically, rather, status should be conceptualized as an *outcome* of inter-group comparison. For example, seller/wholesaler is a salient category into which the Chinese and Ghanaians enter, but also with which they must identify. Identifying, in turn, shapes their relationships in other social and economic practices. Thus, perceived transgression of the seller/wholesaler demarcation and increased Chinese traders in the market space represents a violation of both socially meaningful and economically viable distinctions that can threaten a particular social identity, confer competition and increase intergroup anxiety. At the same time, unanticipated cross-group friendships, like the ones between the Chinese trader and the VAT agent, or between Chinese and Ghanaian traders, may abate this tension by blurring the boundaries dictated by the market and have positive consequences for overall intergroup contact (Pettigrew, 1997). Therefore, constructing a meaningful social identity becomes a relational process of social comparison on categories that are made salient through the three kinds of contact relationships, yet also structured by the local social and economic spaces.

MAKING IDENTITY: CATEGORIZATION AND SOCIAL COMPARISON

Comparing 'Chinese' and 'Ghanaian' identities

In the particular space of Makola market, both Ghanaian sellers and 'experts' represent the Chinese in the market as engaging in *illegal activity*, which surprisingly, one Chinese wholesaler outright confirms: 'Chinese man do everything not legally, you just get a visa and rush to Africa and do business, you don't think about the law, the immigration law, the tax law, the company law, don't think about that, just think about business, money, business, money' (C3S).

This reputation for illegal activities results in constant run-ins with local authorities, sometimes regarded as a friendship as mentioned earlier, and other times as a nuisance. 'In my opinion, most Chinese is wholesale, but you know, the Ghanaian government, they trouble, they trouble us every time, they will send some officer, come outside, around the market to check whether you are wholesale or not' (C2S). One strategy Chinese traders use to deal with harassment is to reinforce their purpose in Ghana: 'I come here to do business, I don't have, enough, plenty energy to talk about these things. . . few trouble, just pay my attention to business, so sometimes, okay money can do it' (C2S).

The openness of Chinese wholesalers to admit paying bribes contradicts Ghanaian 'experts' views on the *evasiveness* of Chinese traders. As one 'expert' explicitly states: 'if a Chinese person says yes [to a business deal], they don't mean they've agreed. . . it means they've understood' (G5E). This view extends beyond trade, the Chinese are seen as evasive about their own origin, their own identity, 'You think they told you the truth? Because Chinese are not fond of telling the truth of where they come from. It's true' (G3E).

Both Ghanaian 'experts' and sellers draw attention to their own *resourcefulness* as means to overcome the fact that the 'Chinese are taking advantage of the whole situation' (G4E). Drawing on the previously identified idea that Chinese goods are a means to employment, one Ghanaian retailer believes that Ghanaians would eventually take over from the Chinese and produce better quality products: 'all these sandals here, they are really made from China and we get a pattern and Ghanaians here too are learning how to do it' (G6S). One of the 'experts' identifies this resourcefulness as something innate, [the Ghanaian is] very clever, he'll watch until he learns exactly what you are doing, and knows every secret about it, and then when he really knows, he'll move you out and do it himself. That's the way he is, they are like that' (G3E). Similar stories are told of Ghanaian entrepreneurs who are circumventing the (Chinese) middlemen by travelling abroad and bringing back goods themselves.

Global others

The presence of global others and global goods in the market offers still other points of comparison to reflect and negotiate complex meaning of belonging and identity beyond immediate local interactions. Whereas *differences* may arise through direct comparisons with the Chinese, *commonalities* may emerge between Ghanaians and Chinese when compared to other foreigners and foreign goods in the marketplace.

The relationships Ghanaian traders build with Chinese traders are coloured by past and present experiences with other traders and goods in the market. For example, the Lebanese and Nigerians are physically present in Makola, while European, Canadian and American second-hand goods or expensive brand-name products circulate in Makola. European or

North American goods are perceived by both Ghanaian retailers and 'experts' to be of better quality than the Chinese goods. 'When the Ghanaian talk to us, the Chinese goods. . . they all rubbish, so the goods from Europe, they all good quality' (C1S) and this affects Chinese businesses: 'that's why Chinese clothes is not, business is not very good, because of Europe second-hand goods' (C3S). However, Ghanaian retailers consciously purchase a range of goods, including cheap Chinese goods that everyone can afford. They recognize that the majority of Ghanaians cannot afford quality products from North America or Europe.

Some Ghanaian traders view a closer alignment with China when discussing family and business relations than with Europeans and North Americans. Meanwhile, Chinese traders view Ghanaians very positively in comparison to other Africans. All three Chinese traders have travelled to or have friends that have been to other African countries and have found Ghana to be a safer, more stable economy and the people more helpful and hard-working. One Chinese trader stressed their shared work ethic when compared to Kenyans: 'Ghana people are working hard, like Chinese people, you know Chinese people they can really work day and night, and when they are working they actually work' (C1S).

THE INFLUENCE OF THE GLOBAL IN THE MARKETPLACE

Social comparison on salient categories is not limited to Ghanaians against Chinese, but also includes foreigners and global goods. As contact effects are mediated by social identity processes, social identity processes are also contingent on a complex interaction of different contact relationships: relationships with *global* places, goods and others. In Makola, Ghanaians traders have multiple identifications that anchor their social identity. Ghanaians traders may see themselves culturally closer to the Chinese, but view the Lebanese as more integrated into Ghanaian society. Ghanaians traders may criticize the cheap quality of Chinese goods in the market compared to European goods yet acknowledge that they cannot afford those European goods. Similarly, Chinese traders situate themselves in Makola through a comparison of their own, or their friends' experiences in other parts of Africa. They also find themselves implicated in the reflexivity of the Ghanaian traders, such that they are made aware (and angry) of the poor status of Chinese goods.

Thus, the marketplace is not just a localized entity for the enactment of social, cultural and economic functions, but also the site of global engagement. These diffuse elements are incorporated into people's interpretative frameworks such that when we speak of a social identity, we are actually conceptualizing a flexible, global social identity that acts as open signifiers to account for the many 'others' that are distal rather than proximal: since the presence and influence of others can be purely cognitive (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

A major limitation in this study is the extrapolation of people's contact experiences to represent their social identity. My initial preoccupation with the contact hypothesis led to the failure of including *direct* questions on social identity, and *specific* links between contact and social identity. I believe further work involving inter-group focus groups can

tease out more complex dynamics and ‘actual’ negotiations between contact and identity. Secondly, I have not considered the role of government in shaping events and interactions in the market. Many of the intergroup interactions in the marketplace were reportedly constrained by government policies and (in)actions. Adequate attention could not be given to such an important issue in this paper.

CONCLUSION: BRINGING DATA AND THEORY TOGETHER USING THE TRI-RELATIONAL MODEL OF CONTACT

A consideration of people-, place- and goods-based relationships have made salient particular categories, such as retailer–wholesaler. This category, like others, offers a point of identification and comparison for which a relational ‘Chinese wholesaler’ and ‘Ghanaian retailer’ social identity emerge and act as open signifiers to attain or maintain positive self-esteem. Chinese traders perceived to be illegally operating in a location that is specified for retail activity can damage a positive Chinese wholesaler social identity. By denying their own involvement with retailing and perceiving bribery as a way of maintaining good interpersonal relations, they can protect *their* positive social identity, and subsequently, maintain positive self-esteem.

Moreover, having Chinese wholesalers with greater access to cheap goods does not threaten a Ghanaian retailer social identity *per se*. The Chinese presence becomes a point of tension when their activities are read in the frame of Ghanaian retailers’ extensive historical involvement, social links and legal rights in the marketplace. However, this ‘Chinese trader’ identity is also a means by which the Ghanaian sellers and ‘experts’ alike use to develop a particular ‘Ghanaian’ social identity of resourcefulness. Resourcefulness helps to maintain positive self-esteem in the face of mounting tension, anxiety and conflict over increased Chinese presence and goods in the market. Thus, the ‘Chinese’ and ‘Ghanaian’ social identities and subsequent identification act relationally as open signifiers to preserve positive self-esteem for both groups in light of their intergroup encounters.

The marketplace has been theorized as a space where meaningful relationships *along with* and *beyond* commercial relations can develop, for example, friendships (Storr, 2008). The competitive *or* cooperative nature of intergroup relations has been cited as a critical mediator of intergroup relations (Dovidio, Gaertner, & Kawakami, 2003), as activities in the marketplace involve *both* cooperation and competition. Thus, contact represents a negotiation between social and economic consequences: the decision to decategorize one’s group as distinct may be beneficial for business but may be detrimental to positive self and group esteem. Thus, we must look at how recategorization, categorization and decategorization can contradict, compete and/or coalesce when we consider intergroup relationships as they are acted upon by local and global practices and the social and economic environments of the marketplace.

Pettigrew’s (1998) statement that contact is an evolving process is an urgent call to examine the intricacies beyond face-to-face relationships and to include the articulations of place-based and goods-mediated relationships. The findings here clearly demonstrate that people’s relationships with a location and wares also influence intergroup contact and inform processes of category salience, social comparison and social identity construction. The significance of this study is two-fold: it provides the first empirical investigation of the interactions between Chinese and Ghanaian traders in Accra, Ghana *and* a model to both broaden and deepen the theoretical roots of contact hypothesis to lend it greater analytical

utility and empirical relevance. A key objective now is to shift our perspective away from a bi-directional exchange of the resources for contact and identity formation to a focus on the diffuse interstices of human relations.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks to Catherine Campbell, Ama de-Graft Aikins, Caroline Howarth, Dramani Yakubu, Amidu Yakubu and Graham Candy for their support with various aspects of this study.

REFERENCES

- Adalemo, I. A. (1981). *Market places in a developing country: The case of Western Nigeria*. Ann Arbor University of Michigan.
- Akyeampong, E. K. (2006). Race, identity and citizenship in Black Africa: The case of the Lebanese in Ghana. *Africa*, 76, 297–323.
- Alden, C. (2007). *China in Africa*. London: Zed Books.
- Allport, G. W. (1954). *The nature of prejudice*. Cambridge, Mass: Addison-Wesley.
- Appadurai, A. (1986). Introduction: Commodities and the politics of value. In A. Appadurai (Ed.), *The social life of things: Commodities in cultural perspective* (pp. 3–63). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Attride-Stirling, J. (2001). Thematic networks: An analytical tool for qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, 1, 385–405.
- Brewer, M. B. (1991). The social self: On being the same and different at the same time. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 17, 475–482.
- Brewer, M. B., & Miller, N. (1984). Beyond the contact hypothesis: Theoretical perspectives on segregation. In N. Miller, & M. B. Brewer (Eds.), *Groups in contact: The psychology of desegregation* (pp. 281–302). New York: Academic Press.
- Broadman, H. G. (2007). *Africa's silk road: China and India's new economic frontier*. Washington: The World Bank.
- Bryman, A. (2004). *Social Research Methods* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Campbell, J. (1985). Ideology and politics in the markets of Ghana. *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 19, 423–430.
- Chamlee-Wright, E. (1997). *The cultural foundations of economic development: Urban female entrepreneurship in Ghana*. London: Routledge.
- Clark, G. (1994). *Onions are my husband: Survival and accumulation by West African market women*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Collier, J. J. (1995). Photography & visual anthropology. In P. Hockings (Ed.), *Principles of visual anthropology* (2nd ed., pp. 235–254). Berlin: de Gruyter.
- Darkwah, A. K. (2002). *Going global: Ghanaian female transnational traders in an era of globalization*. University of Wisconsin Madison. Madison.
- De-Graft Aikins, A. (2004). Strengthening quality and continuity of diabetes care in rural Ghana: A critical social psychological Approach. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 9, 295–309.
- Dixon, J. (2001). Contact and boundaries: 'Locating' the social Psychology of intergroup relations. *Theory & Psychology*, 11, 587–608.
- Dovidio, J. F., Gaertner, S. L., & Kawakami, K. (2003). Intergroup contact: The past, Present and the future. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 6, 5–21.
- Durrheim, K., & Dixon, J. (2005). *Racial encounter: The social psychology of contact and segregation*. London: Routledge.
- Fereday, J., & Muir-Cochrane, E. (2006). Demonstrating rigor using thematic analysis: A hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding and theme development. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, [Online]. 5(1), Article 8. Available at: http://www.ualberta.ca/~iiqm/backissues/5_1/pdf/fereday.pdf [accessed on 15 August 2008].

- Gaertner, S. L., Dovidio, J. F., Anastasio, P. A., Bachman, B. A., & Rust, M. C. (1993). The common ingroup identity model: Recategorization and the reduction of intergroup bias. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 4, 1046–3283.
- Gaskell, G. (2000). Individual and group interviewing. In M. W. Bauer, & G. Gaskell (Eds.), *Qualitative research with text, image and sound* (pp. 38–56). London: Sage Publications.
- Grant, R. (2001). Liberalisation policies and foreign companies in Accra, Ghana. *Environment and Planning*, 33, 997–1014.
- Grant, R., & Nijman, J. (2002). Globalization and the corporate geography of cities in the less-developed world. *People, Place, and Region*, 92, 320–340.
- Hewstone, M., & Brown, R. (1986). Contact is not enough: An intergroup perspective on the “contact hypothesis”. In M. Hewstone, & R. Brown (Eds.), *Contact and conflict in intergroup encounters*. (pp. 1–43). Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Ho, C. G. Y. (2008). The “doing” and “undoing” of community: Chinese networks in Ghana. *China Aktuell*, 3, 46–77. Retrieved on 17 August 2009, from http://www.giga-hamburg.de/index.php?-file=cha_0803.html&folder=publikationen/archiv/ch_aktuell
- Hogg, M. A., Terry, D. J., & White, K. M. (1995). A tale of two theories: A critical comparison of identity theory with social identity theory. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 58, 255–269.
- Hogg, M. A., & Abrams, D. (1988). *Social identifications: A social psychology of intergroup relations and group processes*. London: Routledge.
- Hsu, E. (2007). Zanzibar and its Chinese communities. *Population, Space and Place*, 13, 113–124.
- Jenkins, R., & Edwards, C. (2006). The economic impact of China and India on sub-Saharan Africa: Trends and prospects. *Journal of Asian Economics*, 17, 207–225.
- Kenworthy, J. B., Turner, R. N., Hewstone, M., & Voci, A. (2005). Intergroup contact: When does it work, and why? In J. F. Dovidio, P. Glick, & L. A. Rudman (Eds.), *On the nature of prejudice: Fifty years after allport* (pp. 278–292). Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Latour, B. (2005). *Reassembling the social: An introduction to actor-network-theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The production of space* (D. Nicholson-Smith, Trans.). Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Lentz, C., & Nugent, P. (2000). Ethnicity in Ghana: A comparative perspective. In C. Lentz, & P. Nugent (Eds.), *Ethnicity in Ghana: The limits of invention* (pp. 1–28). London: Macmillan Press Ltd.
- Markova, I. (2007). Social identities and social representations: How are they related? In G. Moloney, & I. Walker (Eds.), *Social representations and identity* (pp. 215–236). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Miller, J., & Glassner, B. (2004). The “inside” and the “outside”: Finding realities in interviews. In D. Silverman (Ed.), *Qualitative research: Theory, method and practice* (pp. 125–139). London: Sage Publications.
- Mohan, G. (2008). Social relationships of new Chinese migrants in Africa. The China Monitor, 26, 6–8. Retrieved on 17 August 2009, from <http://www.ccs.org.za/downloads/China%20Monitor%20February%202008.pdf>
- Mohan, G., & Power, M. (2008). New African choices? The politics of Chinese engagement. *Review of African Political Economy*, 115, 23–42.
- Ong, A. (1999). *Flexible citizenship: The cultural logics of transnationality*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Overa, R. (2007). When men do women’s work: Structural adjustment, unemployment and changing gender relations in the informal economy of Accra, Ghana. *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 45, 539–563.
- Pels, D., Hetherington, K., & Vandenberghe, F. (2002). The status of the object: Performances, mediations, and techniques. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 19, 1–21.
- Pettigrew, T. F. (1997). Generalized intergroup contact effects on prejudice. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 23, 173–185.
- Pettigrew, T. F. (1998). Intergroup contact hypothesis. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 49, 65–85.
- Prezza, M., Zampatti, E., Pacilli, M. G., & Paoliello, A. (2008). Territorial sense of community, ethnic prejudice and political orientation. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 18, 315–332.
- Van Rijswijk, W., Hopkins, N., & Johnston, H. (2009). The role of social categorization and identity threat in the perception of Migrants. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 19, 515–520.

- Robertson, C. (1983). The death of Makola and other tragedies. *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 17, 469–495.
- Sautman, B. (2006). 'Friends and interests: China's distinctive links with Africa', Center on China's Transnational Relations, Working paper No. 12, The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. Retrieved on 23 August 2009, from http://www.cctr.ust.hk/materials/working_papers/WorkingPaper12.pdf
- Seligmann, L. J. (2001). Introduction: Mediating identities and marketing wares. In L. J. Seligmann (Ed.), *Women traders in cross-cultural perspective: Mediating identities, marketing wares* (pp. 1–24). Stanford: Standord University Press.
- Sibley, D. (1995). *Geographies of exclusion: Society and difference in the west*. London: Routledge.
- Srebnik, H. (1999). Ethnicity and the development of a 'middlman' economy on Mauritius: The diaspora factor. *The Round Table, The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs*, 88, 297–311.
- Stets, J. E., & Burke, P. J. (2000). Identity theory and social identity theory. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 63, 224–237.
- Storr, V. H. (2008). The market as a social space: On the meaningful extraeconomic conversations that can occur in markets. *Review of Austrian Economics*, 21, 135–150.
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup contact. In W. Austin, & S. Worchel (Eds.), *The social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 33–48). Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1986). The social identity theory of intergroup behaviour. In S. Worchel, & W. G. Austin (Eds.), *Psychology of intergroup relations* (2nd ed., pp. 7–24). Chicago: Nelson-Hall Publishers.
- Tausch, N., Hewstone, M., & Roy, R. (2009). The relationships between contact, status and prejudice: An integrated threat theory analysis of Hindu-Muslim relations in India. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 19, 83–94.
- Taylor, I. (2006). *China and Africa: Engagement and compromise*. London: Routledge.
- Wild, L., & Mephram, D. (2006). *The new sinosphere: China in Africa*. Institute for Public Policy Research.